1: Ammar E. 1-5 (1951) 1954
MR13 Fellahin MR13
Silwa

THE SOCIAL ORGANIZATION OF THE COMMUNITY

593 On the whole, the structural attitude of husband to wife is one of possession and protection. While the husband assumes the major role in all the activities outside the house, the woman rules almost supreme in matters connected with the household organization.

The second pattern of relationship is that between father and children. With his children, as with his wife, the father avoids excessive intimacy in order to be respected and obeyed. By keeping social distance, he can be regarded as the most powerful agent in administering the moral and social code of conduct. Through his curt and abrupt admonitions he controls both his sons and daughters. In practice he has more to do with his sons, while the mother has more to do with her daughters, but of course there is a great degree of overlapping. There are no serious clashes between parents as to their respective rights of rearing the children. The mother always tries to keep her children quiet while their father is in the house.

[611] The absolute authority of the father over children is due to the fact that they belong to him and his family of orientation. Yet it is also recognized that only the mother and the mother's people can provide the immature children with affection and tenderness. According to Moslem law, imma-
[586] ture children, in case of divorce, can be kept with the mother till the age of seven for a boy, and the age of nine for a girl, while the father sends the expenses of upbringing to the mother. If the mother dies the care and
[855] upbringing of children is usually entrusted to their maternal aunt or maternal grandmother.

[579] The authority of the parents is sanctioned by the Koran. Obedience of children to their parents comes next to the Moslem's major obligations to God and the Prophet. Disobedience to parents ('okouk al walidain) is one of the major sins which is harshly punished in the next world, and, according to Ali, even in this world. A disobedient son or daughter will never live a successful or happy life on earth, and the parents' curse might even affect the son's or daughter's children. To obtain the parental blessing, he continued, is more important than to inherit land or wealth from them, as having their blessing is a prerequisite for both piety and success. Thus, if the father is to wield authority and provide protection, the son or daughter must show 'filial piety' and submission to him as well as to the mother.

One can cite many avoidances that a son must observe in connection with his father, especially in public. A mature son is not expected to sit beside his father in the same gathering; and if his presence is required he should play a very subordinate role, usually evidenced by the fact that he speaks as little as possible, and withdraws at the earliest possible opportunity. If it happens that the father is sitting on a bench at a funeral, for example, the son should sit on the ground; and if he has to sit on a bench, he should not sit on the same bench as his father, or on one opposite to him in order to avoid the face to face position. If the son is lying on the ground, he should sit upon seeing his father passing by; and he should never

1: Ammar E, 1-5 (1951) 1954
MR13 Fellahin MR13
Silwa

high-pressure ego development. The sense of importance and worthiness is continually hammered into the children's minds through comparing them with either their sibling or other children.[1] It is no exaggeration to say that competitiveness in Silwa receives its first stimulus from sibling relationships, and is expressed in the popular saying that 'children who come on top of one another cannot get along with each other'. Siblings of different ages are expected to play in different age groups, especially after the age of six or seven. Although there is no institutionalized favouritism for the first son with regard to inheritance, for example, he is usually the most welcome member of the family as in his later life he will be his father's representative. It is no accident, then, that the first-born son receives more attention, as is usually expressed in his ceremonies of naming, circumcision, and wedding.

Together with this sibling relationship envisaged in a series of children chasing each other, one can hardly fail to note the difference of treatment between boys and girls in general. These disparities between the treatment of the two sexes are not mainly based on the superiority of the male sex or the female, but are largely founded on the relevance of the two sexes to the perpetuation of the family name and their respective economic activities.[2] The popular saying goes to the effect that the daughter's son should not receive much attention from his grandfather as such attention is wasted. However, it does not unduly worry parents in any way if their daughters do not show behaviour indications of rivalry during childhood. It will become clearer, as we proceed, that girls only enjoy relative indulgence during infancy, especially with regard to their comparatively longer period of suckling. But from childhood onwards they are expected to approach sociological adulthood more quickly than the boys.[3]

The second characteristic of the period of childhood is connected with the decreasing amount of care and attention given to the child by its mother. This is evidenced by the children's appearance during this stage of development. They are less clean in body and clothes, and it is not an unusual sight to find nasal mucus on children's faces. Mothers justify this neglect on the grounds that the child at this stage, where he is usually out with other children and thus exposed to the public, should not appear attractive for fear of the evil eye. This lack of interest in children's appearance usually continues until the age of nine, ten or eleven. Thereafter an unkempt or shabby child would be a disgrace to his parents. The renewed interest, especially in the child's clothes, after the age of ten, is related also to the need for covering the organs of reproduction by wearing

[1] For concrete statements of children concerning sibling rivalry, see Appendix VIII, 'Stewart Emotional Response Test', and Appendix X, 'Story Completion Test'.

[2] See Chapter I.

[3] It is assumed here that rivalry is socially inherited and is passed on from parents to their children. 'A mother through her attitude continues the old battle, and in the competitive struggles of her children she relives the competitive struggles of her childhood.' R. H. Hilgard, 'Sibling Rivalry and Social Heredity', in *Psychiatry*, Vol. 14, 1951.

1: Ammar E, 1-5 (1951) 1954
MR13 Fellahin MR13
Silwa

suitable clothes. Grown-up boys and girls who wear torn clothes which might expose their pudenda, are open to shame and gossip amongst other children.

With regard to clothes, it is noticed that children, up to the age of nine or ten, usually wear a one-piece garment called a gallabiah, with a head-cap (takia) for boys, and a coloured head-cloth for girls (mudawaria). Children do not dress like their fathers or mothers, who wear two-piece garments at least, always with a black over-garment, especially when they go out of the house for a gathering or a visit. Yet after about the age of ten, both boys and girls tend to approximate their parents in their dress, with the exception of the black over-garment. Boys, for example, wear pants under their gallabiahs, while the girls wear two gallabiahs when they are outside the house.

The fact that the children after weaning receive a decreasing amount of care and attention is a contributory factor to the high death-rate of children. In Silwa, as judged from the health centre records during the last three years, the highest mortality figure is for the children between two and five years old. For the country as a whole, the birth-rate ranks among the highest in the world.[1] For the years between 1939 and 1943 the birth-rate per thousand in the population was 42·2, 41·6, 40·8, 38·2, 39·6 respectively. The following table shows the death-rate according to different age groups with those of less than five years giving the highest percentages.[2]

TABLE II

Death-rate according to different age-groups

Age	1942 %	1943 %	1944 %	1945 %	1946 %
less than one year	22·22	22·33	23·40	23·50	23·20
from 1–4 years	28·20	25·0	26·81	25·30	25·80
„ 5–9 „	3·90	3·84	3·92	6·04	3·34
„ 10–19 „	3·66	3·84	4·06	4·22	4·43
„ 20–29 „	3·94	4·23	3·98	4·06	4·25
„ 30–39 „	5·05	5·51	5·09	5·02	5·37
„ 40–49 „	4·84	5·38	4·93	4·79	5·18
„ 50–59 „	4·50	5·06	4·68	4·55	4·86
„ 60–69 „	4·87	5·48	5·05	4·85	5·26
„ 70–79 „	5·11	5·64	5·17	5·00	5·45
„ 80–89 „	5·34	5·49	5·15	4·99	5·29
„ 90 and over	7·90	7·87	7·18	7·10	7·06
unidentified ages	0·32	0·299	0·64	0·525	0·405

[1] *Statistical Year Book of the League of Nations*, 1942–4.
[2] *Pocket Census of 1948*, p. 32, from which these percentages are worked out.

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Silwa

THE MAIN CHARACTERISTICS AND EVENTS OF CHILDHOOD

There is another aspect of the high mortality rate of children, which is not confined to the Silwa community, but applies to the rest of the country. Infant mortality has an obvious effect on the stability of marriage relationship, as a woman that bears children who do not survive is in danger of being divorced by her husband, for she is considered the same as one who cannot bear children at all. The larger the number of children surviving, the less likelihood there is of divorce.[1] Hence, the dire need to prevent such a disaster by women who resort to many devices for pregnancy or warding off the evil eye, some of which were described earlier. Official statistics clearly show the relation between divorce and the number of children born or surviving; the latter case is shown in the following table.

TABLE III

The relation between divorce and the number of surviving children in percentages[2]

No. of Children	*Divorces*				
	1942	1943	1944	1945	1946
None	74·7	76·0	77·0	76·8	77·8
One child	16·3	15·78	15·3	15·3	15·0
Two children	5·08	4·78	4·52	4·54	4·2
Three „	2·18	2·10	1·95	1·90	1·77
Four „	0·985	0·907	0·754	0·712	0·778
Five „	0·398	0·395	0·316	0·348	0·332
More than five children	0·318	0·222	0·245	0·186	0·205

This high mortality rate for this age group is partly due to the onset of various child diseases such as measles, whooping cough, chicken pox, diphtheria, as well as endemic diseases such as dysentery. As mentioned earlier, the sickness of children at this stage is acknowledged by the villagers themselves and sometimes attributed to acute states of jealousy from siblings, or to the exposure of the delicate child to the evil eye.[3]

On the whole, the family treatment of the infant is relatively more protective and more attentive compared with the later period of childhood. Nursing children usually fare better than their older siblings in health and appearance. The protective attitude towards nurslings and toddlers could

[1] M. Hassanain, 'Infant Mortality in Egypt', Ph.D. Thesis (unpublished), London, 1940, p. 238.

[2] Worked out from the *Pocket Census of 1948*, p. 31.

[3] According to *Vital Statistics* in Egypt, diseases responsible for infant mortality according to their death roll are infectious diseases, respiratory system diseases, diarrhoea and congenital diseases.

1: Ammar E, 1-5 (1951) 1954
MR13 Fellahin MR13
Silwa

855 854 be explained as a result of the cultural pressure for a large family, the achievement of which is threatened by the high death rate among children. Parents feel that they have done their duty towards the child's care immediately he is able to walk and talk, and the rest of his development is left to God's protection. Moreover, the relatively low mortality rate amongst sucklings in Silwa is due to the fact that they depend mainly upon their mother's milk, while after weaning, adult food is given to the [196] children which cannot be an adequate substitute for the mother's milk because of its unsuitability and deficiency. Yet it must be noted here that 195 children in the province of Aswan are very much undernourished compared with the normal healthy development of other more fortunate children. They are ten centimetres (about 4 inches) less in height, and five kilograms (about 12 pounds) less in weight, and the percentage of haemoglobin in their blood is only 40 per cent.[1]

857 A third important characteristic of this period of childhood is the integration of the boy or the girl with the play group and age mates. About the age of three, the child's attachment to his mother is expected to be over, [866] and this means gradually increasing its contacts with its age group outside the household, and thus the child directs itself, first to its elder siblings and relatives, and then gradually to other children in its play activities. The child may be led by hand or straddled on the shoulder by an older sister to watch other children playing, or taken to defaecate where other children do the same thing. The authority of the older sibling plays a dominant 859 593 part in shaping the child's attitudes from now onwards. The older sisters or brothers act as guardians for their younger siblings; they soothe them when they cry, protect them from interference from other boys or girls. While older boys are playing, one might hear one of them saying: 'Your brother is crying, and I'll have nothing to do with him, you are his brother and you should quieten him.' It is accepted that if the older brothers and sisters are about, other boys and girls hardly ever interfere with the younger siblings for fear of being blamed for their crying or injury. It must be pointed out here that boys are usually less burdened with the care of their younger brothers compared with girls, and this is probably one of the reasons that gives the boys freer scope for movement and rough play.

The younger boys and girls form the fringe of their older siblings' play-groups, but gradually they start to form their own groups, and imitate their elders. One finds that younger boys of five or six might be playing with their older brothers in one game, but one hardly finds boys of eight or nine in the same play group as their older brothers of the age of twelve, thirteen or fourteen. On the whole, siblings after the age of seven or eight usually prefer to go to different places for their games, and till that age, the basis of play is blood relationship and neighbourhood. A stranger boy who wants to join other children in their play is either introduced to the

[1] Ministry of Health Statistics quoted by M. Khattab, in a speech in the Upper House of Parliament, in *Al-Ahram* (Egyptian daily paper), 26 December 1940.

2: Blackman E-S (1920-1926) 1927
MR13 Fellahin MR13
Upper Egypt

far as I know, from private individuals. It is very different in England, where the hospitals for children and adults alike are supported by voluntary contributions. It is not that charity is lacking in Egypt—far from it; but for *organized* charity such as we have in England there is a crying need.

It is not altogether surprising, considering the state of ignorance in which they exist, that the mental outlook of most of the villagers is low. As far as the women are concerned, there is nothing to raise it. Sexual matters form the chief topic of their conversation, and this has a most degrading effect both on them and on their children, before whom they discuss the most private matters without the slightest reserve. Thus the children from their very early years hear subjects spoken of and joked about in a manner that is most revolting to educated people. What chance have the children in such circumstances of growing up into pure-minded men and women? I am told (for such conversation rarely takes place in my presence) that the women are far greater offenders in this respect than the men, who usually refrain from discussing their wives with outsiders. Whether this is true or not I am not in a position to say, but at any rate the children, and especially the girls, who are more constantly with their mothers than the boys, hear the most private sexual matters openly discussed, and in such a way as to poison their minds at the very outset of their lives. Marriage is, of course, the one and only aim in life among the girls, and the desire to get a husband is encouraged in every way by the mothers. It is quite a pitiful sight to see a little girl decked out in all the jewellery she can muster, dressed in a gaily coloured frock decorated with beads and jangles (Fig. 17), and with a veil drawn coquettishly across her face, standing about the village street, or outside the house, obviously on the look-out to attract some man. In all this they are aided and abetted by their mothers, who regard it as a compliment to themselves as well as to their daughters if the latter are sought after as wives at an early age. The Egyptian Government is endeavouring to prohibit the very early marriages which have been usual in the past, and there is now a law forbidding a girl to marry till she is sixteen and a boy till he is eighteen. However, in small, out-of-the-way villages the law has been disobeyed to my certain knowledge in more than one case. False ages were, I suppose, given to the *kāḍi*, as the man who draws up the marriage contracts is called; and he, in view of the fee he

2: Blackman E-5 (1920-1926) 1927
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Upper Egypt

CHAPTER VI

FERTILITY RITES

RITES to ensure the birth of children are practically world-wide, and are of great variety. The failure to produce offspring involved the weakening of the tribe, which in early times depended upon its numerical strength for its defence against hostile neighbours. Hence the importance of the possession of children, especially of the male sex.

Love for their children is a marked trait in the character of the modern Egyptians. I have often seen the roughest *fellāḥ* handle his sick child with remarkable tenderness when he has brought it to me in the hope that I might be able to cure it of some complaint.

Muslim law permits a man to put away his wife if she has no children, and a woman divorced for this cause has small chance of obtaining another husband when once the reason for her divorce has become known. Hence the prospect of childlessness is a very real terror to a wife, and the methods to which women resort in order to prevent such a catastrophe are numerous.

Some years ago, when I was working at a large collection of charms and various magical appliances at the Pitt-Rivers Museum in Oxford, it occurred to me that certain so-called pendants which my brother had brought me from Egypt might have some magical powers attached to them. These pendants are modern copies of ancient Egyptian blue glazed amulets, representing gods, goddesses, sacred animals, or scarabs. I showed these objects to an Egyptian sheikh then resident in Oxford, and asked him what they were used for. After some hesitation he told me that they were women's charms, and were used in Upper Egypt as a means of ensuring the birth of children. I have found that such charms are in great request in all the provinces south of Cairo that I have visited. The sheikh also told me that a man travelling about Upper Egypt with such charms in his possession would be besieged, as he approached a village, by crowds of women begging to be allowed to step over these amulets.

2: Blackman E-5 (1920-1926) 1927
MR13 Fellahin MR13
Upper Egypt

THE VILLAGE MEDICINE-MAN

Each leaf should be rolled up separately, tied up with string, and hung round the child's neck. It is believed that as soon as the leaves dry the child's coughing will stop.

This prescription, given as a cure for a cough, is, so I was told by the sheikh who prescribed it, very old. Some seeds of the cotton-plant which have been dried over the fire are pounded up into a powder. The patient should take some of this dry, early in the morning and also at night.

There are a number of cures for various diseases which are well known to the people themselves, so that it is not always necessary to call in the aid of the 'doctor.' Among the large number which I have collected are the following.

Cure for a cough. A bunch of camel's hair is placed on the chest of the patient, and another bunch on the top of the head, the hair being first steeped in oil. Both bunches are kept in position by large handkerchiefs bound round the body and over the head. This is believed to make the patient perspire, after which the cough goes. This cure is used for children only.

FIG. 125. CHARM TO CURE A CHILD'S COUGH

A man who lives in a small Upper Egyptian village began, two or three years ago, to suffer from rheumatism in his legs. He got worse and worse, until he was so crippled that he was unable to walk. He consulted several doctors, so I was told, but they could do him no good. One day, when some of his friends came to see him, he told them how useless was all the medical treatment he had received. They therefore persuaded him to try the following remedy. Having made several cuts in both legs, he took some garlic and squeezed the juice of it over the cuts, rubbing it well in. The pain was awful, and the man wept from the agony. However, he persisted in the treatment every day for a fortnight. Each day a lot of pus came away—"yellow water" it was called when I was told about this remedy—and each day he got better, and the

2: Blackman E-5 (1920-1926) 1927
MR13 Fellahin MR13
Upper Egypt

CHAPTER XIII

THE EVIL EYE AND OTHER SUPERSTITIONS

IN the preceding chapter I referred to the neglected condition of the children, partly due to the women's utter ignorance of hygiene and also to the fact that facilities for keeping themselves and their children clean are practically non-existent in Egyptian villages. My readers must bear in mind that all the water, for whatever purpose it may be required, has to be fetched by the women from the Nile, or a canal, or even some dirty pool, all of which may be situated at some distance from their homes. But the main reason for the children being so dirty is the belief in, and dread of, the evil eye, or eye of envy, which is to be found practically all over the world. It has not even died out in modern England, where, to my own knowledge, it exists in parts of the eastern counties, and it may possibly exist in other counties also. To the Egyptian peasants the fear of the evil eye is a very real terror from infancy to old age, and on that account it is considered unwise to let a child look too beautiful in case some one may cast the eye of envy over it. Certainly the dirt allowed to accumulate on some of these poor little specimens of humanity should afford a very effective protection against any and every evil eye!

To counteract this baneful influence innumerable methods are adopted, of which I will give a few examples.

If after a woman has received a visit from friends and neighbours her child shows signs of illness she immediately thinks that one of her guests has cast the evil eye on it. She accordingly cuts out a human figure in paper (Fig. 132), and then takes a pin, repeats the name of each of her late visitors in turn, pricking the paper figure at the mention of each name. When she has repeated all the names she sets the figure on fire, saying to her child, "Look at it, look at it!" When it is consumed, she takes a piece of alum, rubs it on the child's forehead, and then places it in a fire, over which she passes the child seven times. When the alum is burnt out, leaving only a charred substance, the mother takes it out of

2: Blackman E-5 (1920-1926) 1927
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Upper Egypt

the fire and stamps on it. After this, it is believed, the injury done to the child by means of the evil eye has been effectually counteracted, and it will get well again.

Another means of averting the evil eye is to throw dust after a person who is suspected of having cast a baleful glance as he or she went by in the street or on the road. Or, again, a piece of the outer garment of the suspected person is secretly cut off with a sharp knife and is put in a pottery saucer containing burning incense. This is waved in front of the person affected, so that the smoke may pass over him and counteract the malign influence. Another method is to break a piece of pottery behind the back of the person who is believed to possess the evil eye.

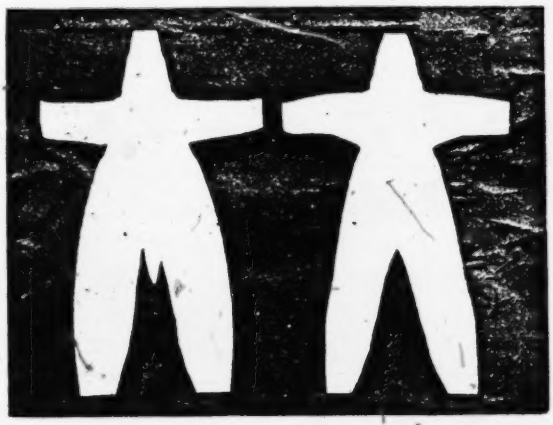

FIG. 132. PAPER FIGURES REPRESENTING A MAN (LEFT) AND A WOMAN (RIGHT), TO BE PRICKED WITH PINS AND THEN BURNT IN ORDER TO CURE A CHILD OF THE ILL EFFECTS OF THE EVIL EYE

Similar precautions are taken when animals are thought to have had the eye of envy cast upon them.

When I was residing in a small village in Middle Egypt the buffalo which produced my daily supplies of milk refused on more than one occasion to yield the necessary quantity for my morning meal. Its owners were convinced that this was due to the evil eye, so they put some fire in a pottery saucer, together with incense, and passed this seven times over the buffalo's head. Immediately after this the milk flowed, convincing them that they were right in their suspicion!

If a woman has a good-looking child, and visitors come to her house, she is careful to note if the child cries when they depart. If it does she then knows for certain that one or more of them has

2: Blackman E-5 (1920-1926) 1927
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Upper Egypt

754 755 855 cast the evil eye over it. To counteract this she will take as many small lumps of salt as there were visitors, and throw them one by one on the fire, which leaps up into flame each time. As the flames burst forth so, she believes, will the evil eye burst, and all harm caused by it be taken away from the child. This is a common practice among both Copts and Muslims all over Egypt.

754 755 Again, if a woman, whether Copt or Muslim, has a baby that is constantly crying she believes that it has had the evil eye cast over it. In order to dispel the mischief done, the child's grandmother (either paternal or maternal), keeping it well away from her body, carries it to the *zīr* (see p. 137), round which she passes it seven times. As she does this she repeats seven times, "O angel of the water, take away the evil eye from this child." Water [576] being very valuable in Egypt, it is believed that every vessel containing it possesses a guardian angel of the water, and this angel, it is thought, will remove the ill effects of the evil eye from the child.

[576] When admiring a child or any other of your neighbour's possessions, it is the correct thing to say, "*Mā shā' Allāh*" ("What God willeth is") or "*Ṣalla 'a 'n-Nebi*" ("Bless the Prophet"), in order that your praise may not be taken for envy and that there may be no suspicion that you are casting the evil eye upon the object of your admiration.

114 754 755 753 The first year that I lived in an Egyptian village I fell ill two or three times with fever. The villagers had never come into close contact before with any Englishwoman, and so every article of my dress was noticed and commented on, as well as my eyes, the colour of my cheeks, and so on. When riding through the village many kindly and complimentary remarks were made: "See, she has the eyes of a cat"—a great compliment, to the minds of the villagers—"How beautiful is the colour of her cheeks!" etc. When I fell ill the second time my attendant, a most faithful and devoted man, was convinced that it was entirely due to some one having cast the evil eye upon me. He therefore harangued the villagers, and told them that they were, of course, quite right to admire me, and that all that they said was true, but that in future such remarks were not to be made without one at least of the protecting phrases mentioned above. The consequence was that the next time I went out riding I was followed by a whole concourse of people, men, women, and children, all ejaculating as I

4:Walker E-4 (no date) 1934 MR13 Fellahin MR13
(ca. 1890)

FOLK MEDICINE IN MODERN EGYPT

XXIV

THE CHANGELING (MABḤŪL)

SOME people say that a child is sometimes a changeling, that is, that the Jinn have substituted it for another, and for this they have two "remedies." In the Buḥaira Province, and its neighbourhood, they put the child, about sunset, inside an oven which has no fire underneath, and close the door tightly, and leave it there until the morning. When they abandon it they say, "God is between us and you; give *us our* son and take *your own.*"

But in Gīza and Benī Suēf, and the surrounding districts, in place of the oven they choose an abandoned tomb, in which no dead person has been buried during a year at least.

These are the two savage methods followed. Often the child dies for want of breath inside the oven, or the tomb; or else some dangerous accident may lead to its destruction.

XXV

[p. 51] "THE FATHER OF FEATHERS" (ABŪ RĪSH)

"Oh, Father of Feathers, please God, you will live."
(Yā Abū rīsh in shāllāh ta'ī sh).

IF a woman have one child only, and whenever she has another boy or girl it dies, she immediately invokes the aid of an "old wife," one of the sorceresses, who bids her dress the child, who she fears will die, in a great peaked cap,[1] decorated with feathers from a goose or common hen or turkey, and to gird it with a black shawl, and thereafter set it on a black she-ass, with its back to the front. Then the boys and girls of the village, or city,[2] gather round him, and call out with one voice, *"Oh, Father of feathers, please God, you will live!"* They go round the village in this way three times, or even four to make quite sure.

[1] [*Ṭarṭūr*, like a dunce's cap.]
[2] [I have seen such a procession in Cairo near the Citadel. Tr.]